

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee

My name is Lensley Gay, Site Coordinator for the Brennan-Rogers Magnet School Family Resource Center located in New Haven. For the past 10 years, I have served families from the West Rock area and from the Brennan-Rogers School community. When we enroll a mom with an infant, we also work with the whole family. That means the parents, siblings, and often the grandparents will sign up for various workshops, classes and activities too. I had a mom bring her mother to the beginners computer class. For eight weeks, they both sat side by side learning how to navigate the computer. Or maybe I should tell you about the little girl making high honors because we started reading to her when she was a baby in a stroller. She would come to her older brother's (1 or 1 1/2) literacy- based playgroup. We also worked for with a domestic violence family that became homeless and relocated to a shelter out of town but still took the bus back to the center for our programs. With the support and a nurturing environment, we helped her remained focused in a difficult time. She has a son in the 5th grade and daughter in the 1st now that have maintained high honors. She was able to find a job and a place to live all in a little over a year. Since she didn't have any family in the area, the (FRC) was there for her.

We have connected many of our parents with services in the community. The majority of our parents would have never participated in these programs if it wasn't for the FRC i.e the Yale's Intergenerational Blood Pressure Study, Circle of Security, Raising Readers and Adult Education just to name a few of our community partners. And our humanitarian services like the Diaper Bank, CT Food Bank, Read to Grow and the Common Ground community garden are great support programs.

I want to close by highlighting how valuable the home visiting component of the (FRC) is to our families. Parents can communicate their parenting concerns, and work on an individualized plan to support their child's developmental, social and emotional needs. The Parent as Teachers program is a researched based parenting program offered to all families regardless of their background or financial status.

I know everyone I speak to always says to me I wish we had a (FRC) at my school.

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*Kids First*